Effective Strategies for Frontline Advocacy

Strategies are actions and activities that are the result of clearly understood goals and objectives; and they’re the means by which you’ll communicate your message. Every frontline advocate needs strategies for talking about the value of his or her special library or information center (and their value as information professionals), as well as for highlighting library issues and needs.

How are you going to inform or persuade people? What will your actions be? Who will work on your activities? Ask your A Team and others for ideas. Enjoy carrying them out! Remember that everything you do should convey your message and let your audience know that your special library is integral to your organization and its employees’ success and reputation.

Here are some ideas to get your brain going:

1. Schedule a Library Open House and invite people who normally don’t visit your library to explore your resources. Publicize it well. Include food (it brings people in!).
2. Offer speakers in your special library or information center who will present “brown bag” talks over the lunch hour. Invite listeners to come, bring their lunches and nourish their bodies and brains at the same time.
3. Send out regular news and updates about new studies that have just arrived, new information about a highly specialized subject or other resources that people might want to learn about.
4. Become a manager’s “personal information specialist” by sending him or her alerts about information relevant to his or her projects or areas of responsibility.
5. Make sure your special library or information center looks and feels welcoming: bright, dusted, uncluttered, and with books and other materials neatly returned to their places. When people walk in, have them think, “I like this place!”
6. Have a bulletin board in your information center with names and pictures of your staff of information professionals. Make sure to post an e-bulletin board of staff if you have a webpage within your parent organization.
7. Write an ongoing feature “column” in your organization’s internal employee newsletter or intranet site. Alert readers to new materials that have just arrived. Presume that some will know little about you, so devote regular space to explaining some of the basic ways you serve your users.
8. Let it be known that the coffee pot is always on and the coffee hot in the library, and invite staff to pour themselves a cup and browse industry journals or other specialized sources during all the hours you are open.
9. Dealing with budget challenges? Think about speaking about those challenges, not just to your budget supervisor, but to other professionals whose job performance will be affected if your services are reduced.
10. Offer to speak at employee orientation and training sessions, letting new people know about
what the library can do for them and about its value to the organization.

11. Think about how you might incorporate visual displays into your special library or information center. Does your marketing department have some fun “retro” packages of your products? Use a glass display case and show them off.

12. Create your own fliers and bookmarks using tools contained in this toolkit: Flier Templates [5.4.e.1] and Bookmark Templates [5.4.e.2]. They can say something as simple as “The library is your partner in patient care.” Insert them in all materials that leave your library. They can be great aids to spreading your special library’s message.

13. Create a blog or a Facebook or Twitter page for your special library or information center, and invite thoughts and comments.

14. Say “thank you” when others come on board and help spread your message. A sincere thank you does two things: It makes the person feel good, and it inspires them to keep helping.

Now, it’s your turn to list your own strategies. Make your list long as you can. Use the space below to get started.